

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4936
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
USLO RIYADH IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 1217

LIMDIS

FOR DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY DAY (NEA)

RIYADH FOR SECRETARY'S PARTY (FOR ATHERTON)

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, IS
SUBJECT: LIKUD COMPLAINT OF AMERICAN PARTIALITY

1. MENAHEM BEGIN TOLD ME THIS MORNING OF HIS UNHAPPINESS
OVER A BLITZER REPORT FROM WASHINGTON IN THE JERUSALEM
POST OF FEBRUARY 16. IN THIS STORY, WHICH WAS HEAD-
LINED "U.S. OFFICIALS SEE PERES STRENGTHENED," THERE IS
THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPH: "AMERICAN POLICY-MAKERS HAVE
NOT CONCEALED THEIR DISPLEASURE OVER THE PROSPECT THAT
LIKUD OPPOSITION LEADER MENAHEM BEGIN COULD EMERGE TO
HEAD A NEW COALITION GOVERNMENT AFTER THE MAY 16
ELECTION." BEGIN SAID THIS STATEMENT WAS "UNPLEASANT TO
READ," AND SEEMED TO REPRESENT INTERFERENCE IN THE
ISRAELI ELECTION CAMPAIGN. I SAID THAT I DID NOT
KNOW ON WHAT BLITZER HAD BASED HIS STORY BUT I COULD
ASSURE HIM THAT THE U.S. WAS NOT TAKING SIDES IN THE
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ISRAELI ELECTION CAMPAIGN. BEGIN SAID IN VIEW OF THE
BLITZER PIECE, HE HOPED THAT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR
A STATEMENT TO BE ISSUED IN WASHINGTON TO THE EFFECT
THAT THE U.S. DID NOT INTEND TO INTERFERE IN THE
ELECTION CAMPAIGN HERE. I PROMISED THAT HIS VIEWS
WOULD BE PASSED ON.

2. BEGIN HAD TRIED TO REACH ME ON FEBRUARY 16 WHEN I WAS WITH THE SECRETARY'S PARTY. BY THE TIME I RETURNED HIS CALL THAT DAY, HE HAD LEFT THE KNESSET FOR EILAT WHERE HE WAS SCHEDULED TO SPEAK. HE WAS ALSO NOT AVAILABLE IN THE OFFICE ON FEBRUARY 17. IN HIS EILAT SPEECH HE DID IN FACT REFER TO THE BLITZER STORY, ASKING THE U.S. NOT TO INTERFERE IN ISRAEL'S ELECTIONS: "THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL WILL CHOOSE ITS NEXT PRIME MINISTER."

3. DAVAR REPORTED FEBRUARY 18 THAT THE BLITZER ARTICLE HAD CREATED "RESENTMENT" AMONG THE LIKUD LEADERSHIP. IT WENT ON TO SAY THAT "THERE WAS DISPLEASURE OVER THE FACT THAT SECRETARY OF STATE CYRUS VANCE HAD NOT FOUND TIME DURING HIS VISIT TO ISRAEL TO MEET WITH THE LIKUD CANDIDATE FOR PRIME MINISTER, MENAHEM BEGIN, M.K., WHEREAS HE DID HAVE THE TIME TO SEE GOLDA MEIR, WHO 'CERTAINLY IS NO LONGER A CANDIDATE FOR ANY ACTIVE ACTIVE POLITICAL FUNCTION.'" (BEGIN HAD BEEN INVITED TO THE ALLON DINNER FOR THE SECRETARY BUT FELT UNABLE TO ATTEND BECAUSE OF HIS SPEAKING COMMITMENT IN EILAT).

4. COMMENT: THIS IS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF HOW THE POLITICAL KETTLE IS BEGINNING TO BOIL HERE. BEGIN'S VIEWS NOTWITHSTANDING, HE IS THE LEADER OF A PARTY WHICH IS SERIOUSLY CHALLENGING THE ALIGNMENT AND WHICH MAY WIN SUFFICIENT KNESSET SEATS TO BE IN THE NEXT GOVERNMENT - AT ITS HEAD OR AS A PARTNER. I SUGGEST
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CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO "PLANTING" A QUESTION AT THE DEPARTMENT NEWS CONFERENCE WHICH WOULD ALLOW THE SPOKESMAN TO REITERATE OUR STAND OF OBJECTIVITY IN THE ISRAELI ELECTION CAMPAIGN. (PERES' SUPPORTERS HAVE BEEN COMPLAINING THAT THE TIMING OF THE INVITATION TO RABIN HAS BEEN ENOUGH TO SWING SOME HESITANT LABOR CONVENTION VOTES IN RABIN'S FAVOR).
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Message Attributes

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